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EFSEC Receives Application to Site Wind Power Project

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) received an application Monday to site up to 121 wind turbines in Kittitas County, between Cle Elum and Ellensburg. Sagebrush Power Partners L.L.C., a wholly owned subsidiary of Zilkha Renewable Energy of Houston, Texas, is proposing to construct and operate the Kittitas Valley Wind Power Project that would produce approximately 182 megawatts of electricity.

EFSEC will begin its review process that includes a detailed review of Sagebrush Power Partner's application, development of an environmental impact statement, and holding hearings regarding the proposal. A public information meeting will be held in Ellensburg to inform residents about the project, describe the EFSEC review process, and hear initial public comments regarding the project. Announcements of the meeting will be issued in February.

In 2001 the state Legislature changed state law allowing alternative energy resources of any size to submit applications to EFSEC for state review. EFSEC Chair Jim Luce noted: "The Sagebrush proposal is the first alternative energy resource to be submitted under the 2001 law and we look forward to reviewing this type of renewable energy facility".

Under state law, EFSEC is responsible for reviewing applications to site, construct, and operate a variety of energy facilities in Washington State. EFSEC reviews projects through public meetings, use of independent technical experts, development of environmental impact statements, and formal adjudicative hearings. At the completion of its review, EFSEC submits a recommendation to the Governor. The Governor makes the final decision to approve or deny a project.

EFSEC is a state board with a chair appointed by the Governor, and representatives from five state agencies that are required to be represented on the board. When an application is submitted to EFSEC for review, the board may be augmented by members from four additional state agencies that are authorized, but not obligated, to participate in the review of applications. In addition, representatives from the local government and port district in which the project is to be located are appointed to serve on the board.

Information regarding EFSEC and projects under review is posted on its Web site at www.efsec.wa.gov. Copies of the Kittitas Valley Wind Power Project application will be available for review at the EFSEC office in Olympia and at local libraries in Cle Elum and Ellensburg.